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**For More Information:**

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**State Grant Funds \$10,000-per-student for College in Exchange for Public Service**

*Volunteer program with FIND Food Bank creates opportunities for local students*

College of the Desert is partnering with FIND Food Bank, OneFuture Coachella Valley, a local non-profit organization, and Growing Inland Achievement, to offer up to \$10,000 in paid fellowships and scholarships to students who serve a year of community service, part of a larger statewide effort to create a debt-free path to higher education.

The College applied for and was awarded a state grant designed to engage students in meaningful service opportunities to solve problems in their communities, teach key skills, and reduce student debt.

"This is an incredibly valuable opportunity! This grant provides College of the Desert the ability to support our students financially, while teaching them the value of service and creating a pathway to give back to our community," said Superintendent/President Martha Garcia, Ed.D. "Public service, like college, has the potential to help people find their place and purpose in the world."

College of the Desert is one of 45 universities and colleges, and one of 18 community colleges, selected statewide to participate in Californians for All College Corps, a first-of-its-kind program from Governor Gavin Newsom's Office to help students graduate from college with less debt, while building service-focused leadership skills and a sense of civic responsibility. About 6,500 students across California will be involved in the service-learning project over the next two years, addressing issues such as climate change, K-12 education, COVID-19 recovery, and food insecurity. College of the Desert's project partnership will focus on mitigating food insecurity issues in the Coachella Valley.

Students who invest a total of 450 hours at FIND Food Bank and in the program over the academic year will receive \$7,000 and qualify for a \$3,000 state scholarship to attend College of the Desert. Volunteer opportunities include pilot campus supermarkets and FIND's mobile food pantries and distribution centers.

FIND Food Bank feeds approximately 150,000 people each month at more than 150 distribution sites in the desert region. In 2019, College of the Desert students, volunteering through other programs, staffed FIND's monthly mobile food pantries to provide more than 22,000 students and Coachella Valley residents with approximately 232,000 pounds of food at four campus locations.

"Every day, FIND helps to address the pressing problem of food insecurity and inequities across our region," said Debbie Espinosa, FIND Food Bank's President and CEO. "Partnering on this project will create a cadre of future leaders to help us meet our mission of solving hunger for life."

The program is open to AB 540-eligible Dreamers, as well as part-time and full-time students at College of the Desert and local school districts or OneFuture Coachella Valley.

The paid fellowship and scholarship money are available in addition to other student aid, including the current grant offer of \$100 per unit for College of the Desert's Spring semester, the pLEDGE program, which offers two years of free tuition, and Cal and Pell Grants.

The College will offer 50 fellowships in the 2022-2023 school year and 50 for 2023-2024; half of the available spots each year will be reserved for students from OneFuture and those engaged in dual enrollment programs at the school districts. The money will cover the \$46-per-unit cost of tuition, plus fees, books, supplies, and some living expenses; a full-time course load is 12 units or \$552 per semester.

The program represents a \$1.8 million investment in the Coachella Valley, an opportunity to enhance regional partnerships and scale efforts to mitigate food insecurity, which is a barrier to completion for many community college students.

More information is available online at [collegeofthedesert.edu](https://collegeofthedesert.edu) and [californiavolunteers.ca.gov/californiansforall-college-corps](https://californiavolunteers.ca.gov/californiansforall-college-corps).

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